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Souvenir Book

of

The Great Chelsea Fire

April 12, 1908.

CONTAINING THIRTY-FOUR VIEWS OF THE BURNED DISTRICT AND PROMINENT BUILDINGS.
ALSO A DESCRIPTIVE SKETCH.

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The Great Chelsea Fire

On Sunday April 12. 1908, at about 11 o'clock A. M., an alarm was rung in for a fire in the works of the Boston Blacking Co. on West 3rd St., near the Everett line. The fire department responded immediately and succeeded in putting out the fire with but very little damage, but the forty-mile gale that was blowing at the time carried sparks from the fire to nearby houses, and soon all the frame buildings in that vicinity were ablaze. The fire then traveled with great rapidity in an easterly direction, and despite the best efforts of the department, was soon beyond control. Aid was called in from nearby cities, but even the largely increased force was unable to cope with the fire, and and could only endeavor to keep it within certain limits. So intense was the heat that buildings made of solid granite crumbled, and were entirely destroyed. The fire could not be checked in its easterly course, and in a short time had traveled across the city and was stopped only by the Mystic River at the East Boston line. Almost the entire business section on Broadway was destroyed, the northern boundary of the fire on Broadway being the Boston & Maine R. R. tracks, and the southern boundary Chelsea Square. Between these two points on Broadway almost all the retail business of city was done. Among the more prominent public buildings that were destroyed are the City Hall, Y. M. C. A. Building, Odd Fellows Building, Chelsea Savings Bank and County Trust Co. buildings. The number of buildings destroyed is estimated at about 1500, while between 10,000 and 12,000 people were rendered homeless.

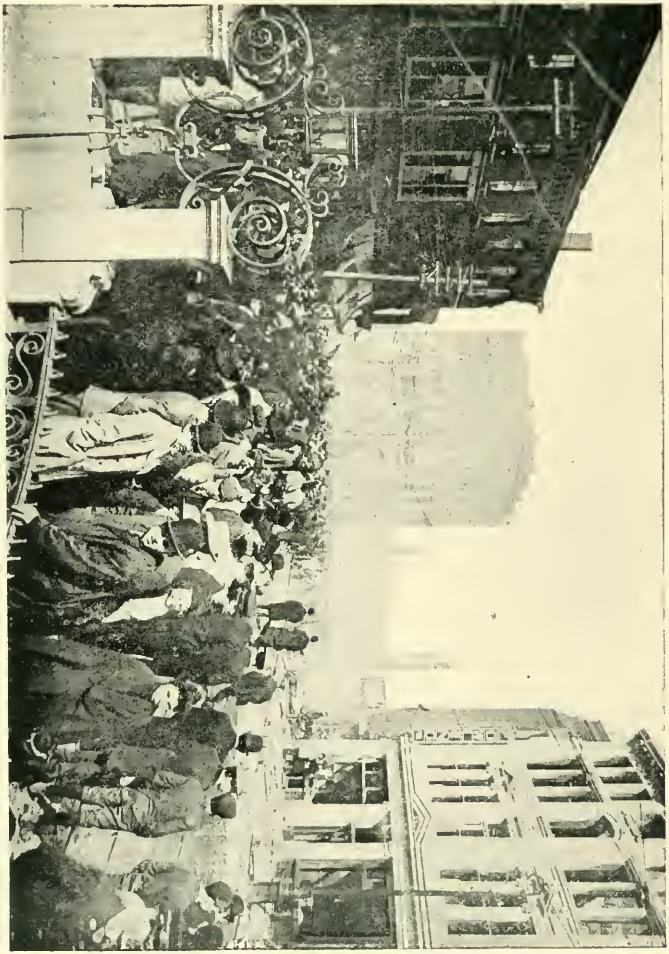
No sooner had the awful havoc that the fire had wrought become known, than relief funds were started all over the country, and many of the cities and towns in Massachusetts gave substantial amounts for the relief of the stricken city.

Within two weeks after the fire, Lee Higginson & Co., who were financial agents for the official relief committee had received almost $300,000, and many thousands of dollars more were given directly by employers of the burnt-out families, and by fraternal organizations such as Knights of Columbus, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Elks, Eagles and many others, almost all of which established relief headquarters at once. The central relief committee immediately opened relief stations at the new High School building and at Lincoln Hall, and thousands were fed at these two places daily.

By Tuesday, great quantities of clothing had been received for distribution, and a receiving station was established at Keany Sq. Boston, where contributions of clothing and household goods were received.

On Wednesday a large number of people were furnished with cooking utensils and mattresses, and by the end of the week thousands of sets of bed-clothing had been distributed.

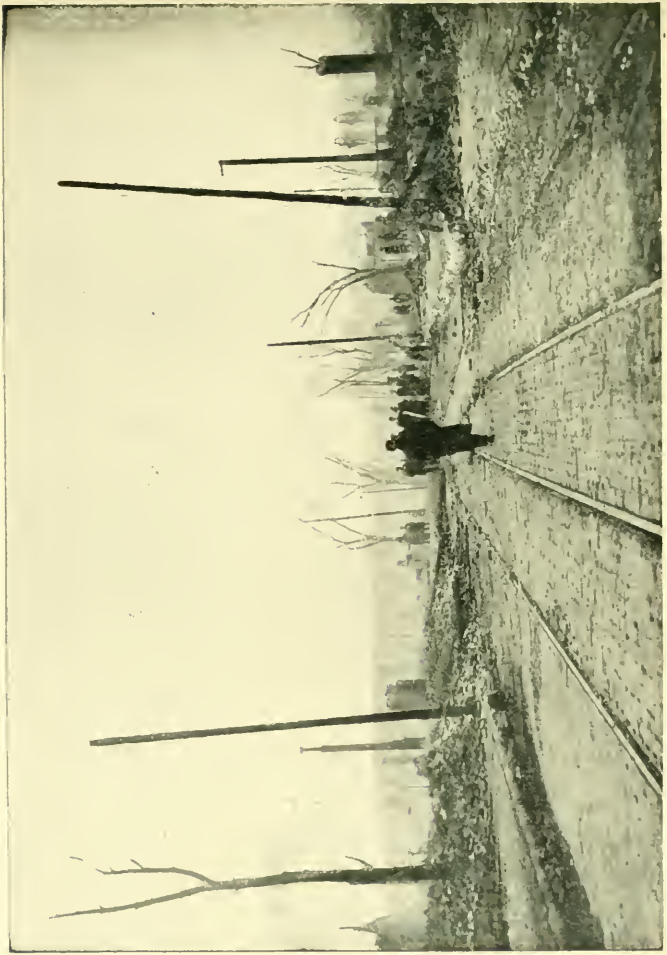
In response to a call from the relief committee, hundreds of automobiles offered their services in delivering goods to the homeless, and the work of relief was greatly aided by this means.



Chelsea Square looking north up Broadway, showing Chelsea Trust Co. Building in centre, and Odd Fellows Building at right.

Stebbins Block, showing Knights of Columbus Hall, the southern limit of the fire on Broadway.

Looking up Broadway from Third Street. The heart of the Business District.



Everett Avenue from Broadway showing what remains of Chelsea's most congested district.

Looking toward Everett Ave. from rear of Knights of Columbus Hall, showing Congregational and Universalist Churches and Chelsea Trust Co Building.

Corner Post of Granite Block, Corner of Fourth Street and Broadway,
All that remains of a magnificent stone building.

Looking down Everett Ave. from Chestnut Street, another view of the congested district.

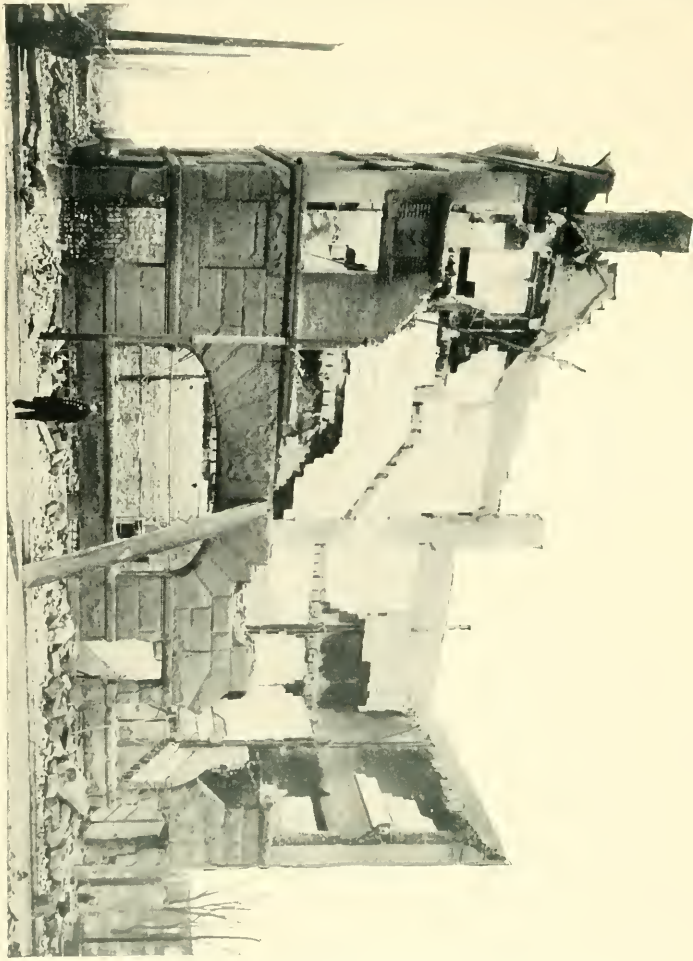
Odd Fellows Building, Chelsea Sq. The small view shows the building as it appeared before the fire.

Cherry Street from Everett Avenue.

Bellingham Hill from Chester Ave. This hill was the site of many fine residences

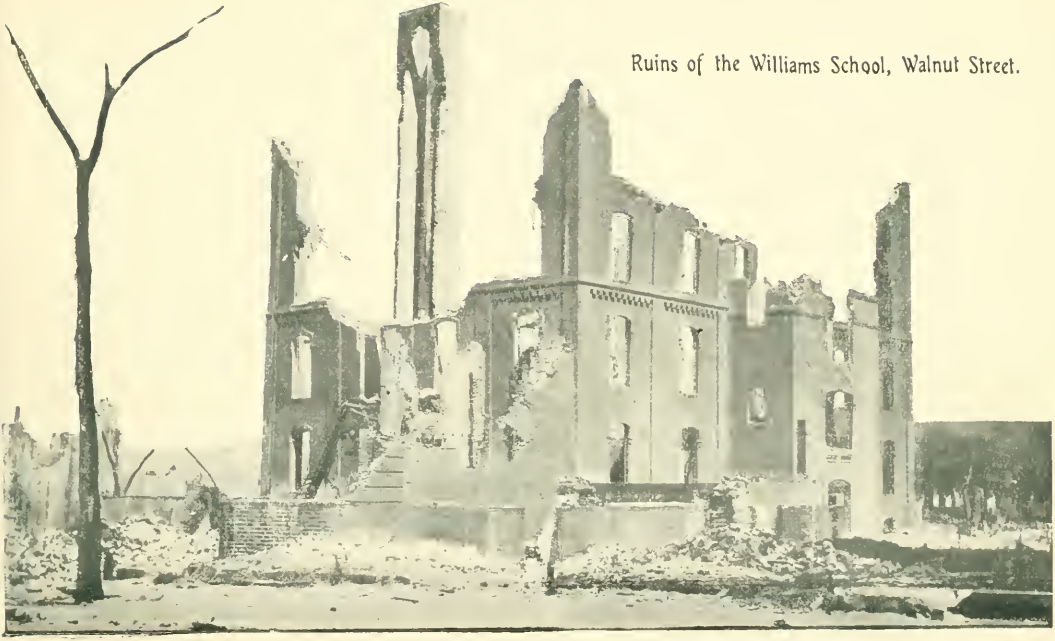
All that remains of the residential section on Chester Ave.

Looking up Chestnut Street from Third, showing Universalist Church and Central Congregational Church in the distance.



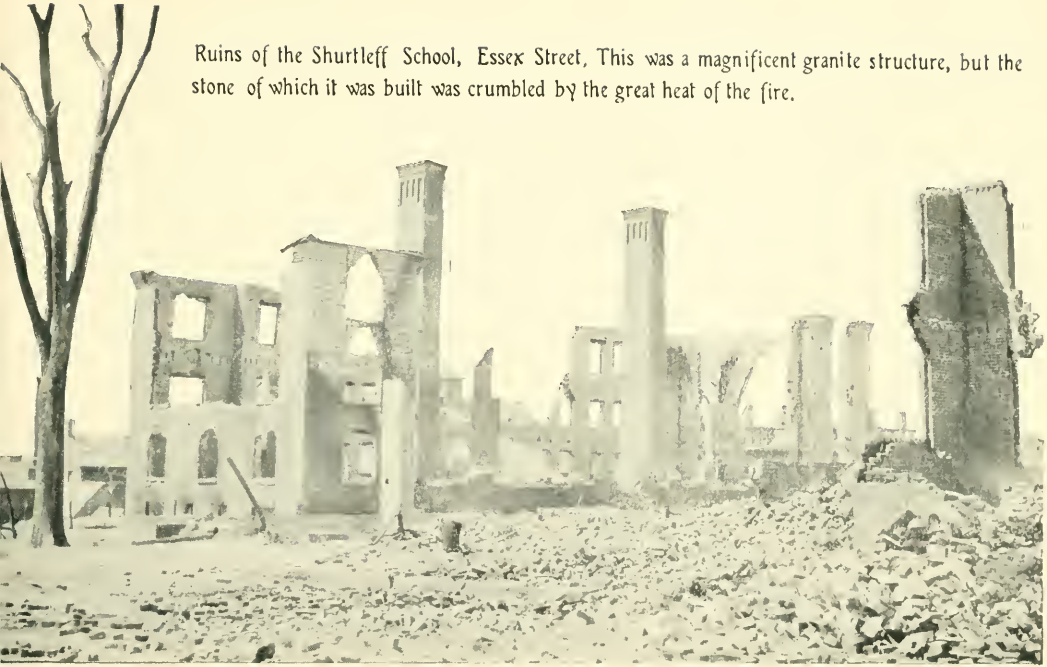
Ruins of the Chelsea Savings Bank Building, cor. Broadway and Congress Ave.

Bellingham Station, Broadway



Ruins of the Williams School, Walnut Street.

Ruins of City Hall and City Hall School, Central Avenue.



Ruins of the Shurtleff School, Essex Street. This was a magnificent granite structure, but the stone of which it was built was crumbled by the great heat of the fire.

Wreck of a Lynn Fire Engine, which had to be abandoned

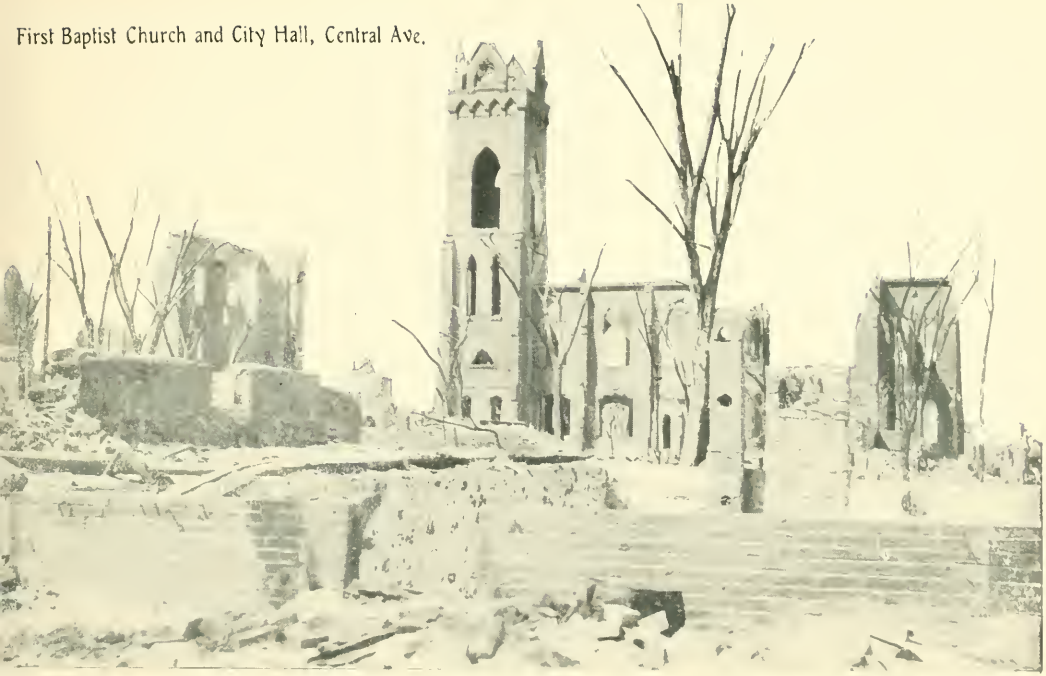
Ruins of St. Rose Catholic Church, Broadway, Chelsea, Mass. After the big fire of April 12, 1908.

Universalist Church, corner Fourth and Chestnut Sts.
The small view shows it as it looked before the fire.

Central Congregational Church, corner Fifth and Chestnut Sts.
The small view shows it as it looked before the fire.

First Baptist Church, Central Ave. Before and after the fire.

First Baptist Church and City Hall, Central Ave.



St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Hawthorne Street, which was entirely destroyed

Y. M. C. A. Building, Bellingham Square, entirely destroyed

Fitz Public Library, destroyed in the Big Fire.

Birdseye View of Chelsea, Mass. from Powderhorn Hill. The entire district shown in this view with the exception of the houses in the immediate foreground was entirely destroyed in the Big Fire

Chelsea Square. The nearer end of this square marks the southern limit of the fire on Broadway

Unitarian Church, Hawthorne Street,

Soldiers Monument at Union Park. It was to this Park that many of the burnt out families fled with their belongings

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A list of the more prominent buildings destroyed by the fire is given below, although this does not by any means include a complete list of the public or semi-public structures that were burned.

CHURCHES	SCHOOLS	PROMINENT BLDGS.
Central Congregational Church	Williams Grammar	City Hall
St. Rose Catholic	Frank B. Fay	Y. M. C. A. Building
First Universalist	Shurtleff	Odd Fellows Building
First Unitarian	Bellingham	Chelsea Trust Co.
First Baptist	Broadway	Chelsea Saving Bank
Polish Catholic	Highland	Granite Block
Bellingham M. E.	City Hall	State Armory
St. Luke's Episcopal	Shawmut St.	Public Library
Several Synagogues	Parochial	County Savings Bank